

# Kill is the New Kill

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Years after escaping her mother's vicious drug ring, Kiryuin Satsuki finds herself in prison for her past crimes. Her plan to peacefully serve out her time is destroyed, however, by the appearance of her cheeky, drug-running sister. Relationships that were once complicated are now downright dysfunctional, and things are sure to get out of hand. Ryuko la Satsuki. AU

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# Kill is the New Kill

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# Exordium

This is less of a crossover and more of a borrowing of a setting. Either way, I freaking love Orange is the New Black (truly a Canterbury Tales for the pleasure of the modern viewer.) I don't have the energy to invent a bunch of new characters so if I go on I'm gonna keep the setting small. Enjoy!

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"Strip."

"But I -"

"Now, inmate!"

She sighed and, ignoring the hideous churning that began to bubble like venom in blood in her stomach, did as she was told. She was good at that, doing as she was told. That's what landed her here in the first place. She roughly pulled her cardigan over her head instead of unbuttoning it and started counting. Even in her head the mental words were quiet, barely above a whisper, counting the prickling fingers she felt - no, had felt - as she undressed in total placidity; but the exercise in rote calmed her, soothed her into the submission that was expected from her.

As she sank to her haunches for inspection, a small, wry voice in her mind barked out a harsh laugh.

*And you thought you could escape.*

It was years ago. How many? Five? Six? How long ago had she breathed her first breath of free air? Broken free from her mother's atrocious drug ring and her easy-breezy sister runner?

*My sexy, gorgeous, backstabbing, slutfaced, a-hole of a sister.* Satsuki surprised herself by thinking of Ryuko. Her face turned nearly plum with rage, and her teeth cracked audibly against each

other as she was ordered to stand and don her new uniform. *She's the reason I'm here. She's the reason I'm not home with Uzu watching a stupid movie and eating popcorn.*

But her emotion was to her disadvantage, and she knew it. She took in the grey concrete and the dull grey shelves piled high with orange fabric, and even as her heart pounded its vicious confusion into her ears, she forced her soul to take on the grey emptiness of her surroundings. Her face still and blank, staring impassively at the bored guard as a thin blanket was shoved into her arms, waiting for her next instruction. The attitude, the emptiness, the utter surrender, she had done it all before.

Satsuki wanted to throw up.

Her stomach drove down past her hips and into non-existence as she was led down the cold hall, the shouting and clanging of bars startling and unfamiliar to her. Even as her body twitched its discomfort, her thoughts were far away. She tried to think of her beautiful home, full of windows; her cute and charming fiancé, always ready to laugh and to tease; even his family so irritating she wanted to gnaw her own arm off to escape. She tried, she really tried.

All she could think of was her.

*"Come on, babe, just try a little."*

*"You know I can't handle that shit, Ryuko. Do you want me to die? 'Cause I'll do it. Go sell it to your 'hybrids.'"*

*"Ugh." a puff of air, more amusement than disgust. "You're no fun." but she tapped the shimmering red powder back into its envelope. Satsuki sighed a silent breath of relief. Her hatred for the drug was unspoken but real nonetheless. It turned her sister into a demon, an unstoppable force of passion, lust, and power. The drug lent her an inconceivable strength that dissolved consent into an unnecessary formality.*

*It must be borrowed from another day, she thought, her mind waxing pensive. Whenever Ryuko came down after a hit off the 'life fibers,' ('libers,' some called it), she was always exhausted, pale, sick. More than the secret atrocities committed while under the influence, Satsuki hated what the drug did to Ryuko after the high had worn off.*

*Ryuko, noticing Satsuki's furrowed brow, grinned, showing off her canines. Smiling, Satsuki thought. She's always smiling. Despite... everything, Ryuko never stopped beaming like a beach sunset. It perfectly matched Satsuki's perpetual frown. Easily, Ryuko squirmed out of her seat in the bay window and straddled Satsuki's lap from where she sat on the bed, taking her face in her hands.*

*"Hey," she said, futilely rubbing at the wrinkles that had formed between Satsuki's eyebrows, "Come on, don't make that face, eyebrows. Come on, give us a smile. You can do it! I believe in you!" Playfully, Ryuko hooked her fingers into the corners of Satsuki's mouth, forcing her to bare her teeth. Satsuki batted her away, but a laugh trickled out of her regardless.*

*"I worry about you." Satsuki said, sudden but truthful. Ryuko leaned back on her heels and hooked her hands behind her head.*

*"Hey, don't do that!" A sudden gleam entered her sharp azure eyes. "Well, maybe worry a little. Did you really think you could get away with wearing a shirt like that around me?" her hands were on her shoulders now, pushing at her to lie down. Satsuki complied, enjoying the soft touch. When sober, Ryuko was as tender as a lamb, a foil against the traditions of the family. Kiryuins have no use for non-hybrids, other than as toys, amusements, and mules. Ryuko, surprisingly, treated her like a person, though, ever-careful of her feeling and thoughts, and for that she would be forever grateful.*

*I love her.*

*And she did.*

*"Ryuko, I'm wearing a regular shirt. It's a button-up business blouse."*

*"Ohh, I know. Oh, geez. It's just so normal! God, I'm so turned on. Take me now, you normal goddess!"*

*Her laugh was silenced with a kiss. In earnest, she returned it before pulling away pointedly, pushing her nose into Ryuko's cheek.*

*"Do you ever feel like you've had enough?" Satsuki whispered, Ryuko sat up, resting her weight on Satsuki's hips. She sighed and pinched her nose with her fingers.*

*"Sats, we've talked about this. I know things have been bad for you, but running away isn't going to -"*

*"Don't pretend it hasn't been bad for you, too! You're always high, always crashing, trying to do some screwed-up job you didn't sign up for. You don't even want to try?" Ryuko's grin never faltered, but something in her eyes turned to ice. Her fingers stopped suddenly in their quest to unbutton the bottom buttons of Satsuki's blouse, and she slid off the bed with a sharp flick of her head. With false leisure, her hand snapped the envelope off the nightstand and into the air, snatching it back with a jaunty wink.*

*"Maybe I do want another hit after all."*

Nervously, Satsuki eyed her temporary bed. At least it was a top bunk. Not quite sure what to do, she climbed up and sat on the pathetic excuse for a mattress, sparing a quick glance at her roommate. She was a tiny troll-doll of a person, hair startlingly pink.

"Hey," she rasped at Satsuki, her voice sounding like a smoker and helium-junkie made a beautiful pink baby together. "I'm Nonon."

"Satsuki." she returned, but kept her eyes down. Nonon shrugged and returned to the magazine propped up on her knee. In similar fashion, Satsuki returned to her thoughts.

*I thought I was free.* She scoffed to herself, barely making any sound. So there was really no point, no point to running. If she

wasn't a prisoner of her family, she had to be a prisoner of the state. No, she reminded herself, shaking off the sinking feeling of inevitability to be replaced with hatred. *I'm here because she ratted me out. She couldn't stand it that I'd moved on without her. She couldn't stand it that I was finally happy.* Satsuki bit her lip and with all her might forced the angry tears threatening to spill back into her tear ducts. The force of emotion that suddenly overtook her for a person she hadn't seen in over five years felt disproportionate, sick. *Asshole! I hate her! God, I hate her!* Taking a few calming breaths, Satsuki steadied herself, leaning her head back against the concrete wall. *It's just a little over a year. I can do that. I'll just quietly serve my time, keep to myself, and I can go back to living my life.*

Exhausted, she promptly fell asleep.

The next day passed in a blur of semantic and social note-taking. Eager to take in everything she needed to know, Satsuki kept her eyes open and her mouth shut. Periodically, she would glance at her wrist, feeling as if there was someplace she needed to be. *I can do this.* she told herself, keeping her face set into its furrowed mask. *I can do this* . Her resolve broke, however, when she saw a familiar face.

"Hey," Ryuko said, appearing suddenly before her in the yard, grinning like an idiot and rubbing the back of her neck. "So, we should probably get this over with, huh?"

Satsuki screamed.

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I'm not sure if I'll continue this, but I had fun with the thought so maybe I will.

# The Mayfly

Six years ago:

Satsuki carefully rubbed the back of her gloved hand over her eyes, careful not to breathe in any of the fine red dust that coated her fingertips. A twist of nervous energy lodged in her chest, her eyes flickering continuously to the analog clock mounted on the warehouse wall, but she kept her motions precise and mechanical.

The metal scoop slipped into the five-gallon container as she diligently measured out the appropriate amount of the shimmering powder. With her free hand, she cut the pages of a new book and poured the drug into the space between the binding and the centerfold, tapping her nail against the side of the scoop and piercing the perfect silence with a sharp, metal ping. Sighing, she closed the book and picked up another from the massive pile beside her and began again, letting her thoughts wander. Suddenly, she chuckled, shutting her eyes as her face relaxed into the gesture.

*Liberis in a liber. Haha.*

Immediately after the thought flitted away, Satsuki looked up from her work and grimaced, eyes glaring balefully into the middle distance.

*Terrible!*

She'd always wondered where her awful sense of humor had come from. Stupid puns and pretentious twists of terminology had always been with her from a young age and still haunted her to this very day.

*Ryuko's always been better at jokes...*

At the thought of her sister, Satsuki's heart plummeted and she felt her hands go icy. Her face resumed its stern frown and her fingers



flew through the paces of her task, careless and cold. *What will I say to her ?* A sudden, sharp pain in her chest, rending at her heart, sent her hands seizing. The scoop dropped to the concrete floor as she instinctively clutched at her chest, tears springing to her eyes. Struggling for composure, she focused on the sweeping arc of the powder she had dropped, scattered, to the ground. A giddy, wheezing laugh burst from her mouth as she realized how much of the drug she had wasted.

*Mother won't be happy.* Her composure was suddenly regained, and she stood, sneering down at the bucket before her. Scoffing, she kicked it over and, in a single moment of pure petulance, struck the heap of brilliant red sand into oblivion, coating everything with a fine dust. *In a moment, it won't matter.*

For the umpteenth time that hour, her eyes flitted to the clock. She knew her timing was delicate, but it couldn't be helped. She had a small window. No, it was too big. Frowning, she extracted her hands from their rubber gloves and meandered to the door, heels clacking loudly on the concrete.

*Ferry leaves at four. She had her hit at one. It takes ten minutes to get to the pier. Shit. It's too long.*

Every day at one o'clock on the nose, Kiryuin Ragyo took her life fibers. Unlike Ryuko's reaction of liquid rage and blind lust, the drug rendered her powerful and calculating beyond imagining. Satsuki shuddered as she called to mind the hideous might in those claw-like hands. She took a deep breath and allowed the cooling dread to play against the fire of her anxiety, combining to create a false calm.

The strength provided by the substance didn't last, however. It dissolved, fortunately, into a sluggish illness that left the taker of the drug sickly and weak. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon for Satsuki's mother to crash into a kind of second wind, allowing her to shake off the ailment into another bout of obnoxious power.

*I need to slip into that window of weakness. I can't be caught off-guard.*

It was three o'clock.

*She should be coming down by now.*

Satsuki entered her room and immediately turned to the safe in the wall. With utmost precision, she punched in the combination, hands now steady and sure. Delicately, she pressed her fingers to the edges of the disc inside, lifting it from its hiding-place.

*Now. I have to do it now.*

If Ragyo saw what was on the disc while under the influence of her precious powder, Satsuki was sure she wouldn't be allowed to see the light of day again. It didn't matter how carefully she prepared herself - she needed that window.

Slapping the round plastic against her palm, Satsuki stepped out of her room and, with an air of assumed nonchalance, handed the disc to a passing servant.

"Take this immediately to my mother, if you would."

"Ah... o-of course, Lady Satsuki. Right away!" Satsuki watched him skitter wildly away before sliding back into her room. A cup of cold tea sat on her nightstand. Mind elsewhere, she picked it up, tracing the lip of the cup with the tip of her finger before downing the beverage, gritting her teeth against the bitter dregs.

Her heart lurched again as she examined the duvet made neatly over her bed. *Ryuko... I'm sorry.* She shook her head. It was too late. Her plan was already in motion. She had made her decision and would be damned if she went back on herself. Briefly, she considered leaving a note, but something inside her screamed out that that would be too cruel, too heartbreaking. She needed to cleanly cut the thread that connected them, leave no trace. A sigh

shook her frame as she lowered herself onto the bed, feeling empty and heavy.

She was fluttering in and out of sleep when she was awoken by a heavy pounding on her door. Instantly alert, she gathered her things, tossing a bag over her shoulder and attaching Bakuzan to its cord at her hip. After a moment's hesitation, she also secured a small dagger to her thigh, adjusting it so the hilt rested just within the reach of her fingers.

"Lady Satsuki," the servant was out of breath, shaking as he struggled not to hold a hand over the red handprint on his cheek. "Your mother wants to see you immediately. She's in her chambers."

"Thank you," she murmured, softening. As she passed she gently pressed a hand to his shoulder. "I'm sorry. Get some ice for your face." He bowed but stood frozen as she passed him, sensing the untold gravity in her body language.

She didn't remember the walk to her mother's room. The next thing she knew, she was standing at the door, throwing her satchel down and out of the way before rapping sharply over the doorknob. For the first time in her life, she didn't wait to be invited in. Before the steel in her heart had time to falter, Satsuki pushed open the door and stood, stiff and at attention, before Kiryuin Ragyo.

She was pale from the drug-induced weariness, but she was standing, leaning against the frame of the bay window. Written upon her face was an expression of quintessential lividness, scrawling bright spots of pink high up on her cheekbones. Still, her voice was even and hypnotic, purring coolly and incongruously from clenched teeth.

"Satsuki, sweetheart, what's this?" pinched between her fingers was the disc, shaking slightly from the incensed trembling of the arm that held it. Satsuki tossed her head back, her lip curling into a sneer.

"I believe you know, Mother. You are proud if you allow the details of your very illegal going-ons to be so easily recorded. I'm sure the Bureau of Investigations will be very pleased with it."

To Satsuki's lurching surprise, her mother was able to stand and walk on her own, and in a moment she was before her, cupping her face in her cold, smooth hands.

"Satsuki," she rumbled into her ear, pressing her lips against the tender lobe. Satsuki swallowed and mustered all her strength to keep from throwing herself back and out of reach. "Whatever are you planning to do with this little... tidbit? Are you tired of eating scraps? Is my own daughter trying to take the family business from me?"

"No." Satsuki kept her voice low, but its inherent resonance still made the air in the close room hum. The strength of her mother's hands surprised her, and she ran through her calculated speech more quickly than she meant to. "Inumuta has a copy of that video, and unless I instruct him to do otherwise, he will have it displayed on all public channels at precisely four-thirty today. Unless I contact him before then, you will be ruined."

As expected, Ragyo's face twisted and her hands gripped suddenly at her daughter's throat. Satsuki made no move, but was again astounded by the ferocity of the claws that gripped her.

*She's still this strong?* her eyes shifted to the clock on the nightstand. *I've miscalculated. I'm too early.* She closed her eyes, but a raw expression - part smile, part snarl - stole over Satsuki's face. *Well, I'm here now. Whatever happens...* Her mother shook her to get her attention.

"Be a dear, then," Ragyo's voice maintained its icy melodiousness, clashing with the violence in her hands "And call your friend. Let him know we won't be needing him. You and I, I think, need to have a chat."

*She takes me for a fool.*

"I'm afraid that won't do any good. Unless I call him from the phone on the four o'clock ferry, no matter what I say to him, the video will go out." Satsuki locked eyes with her mother, daring her to kill her or keep her locked in the house. Ragyo's twisted face suddenly smoothed as her mind struggled to outflank or circumvent. Her eyes lidded suddenly as her dark eyes clouded and her lips curled into a soft smile. Satsuki already knew what she was thinking, what plan her mother had concocted, but chose not to reveal herself. Ragyo's grip on her throat suddenly loosened and her hands slid down to lie flat on Satsuki's chest.

"The four o'clock ferry, is it? Are you in such a hurry to leave your dear mother? Ha." Ragyo bared her teeth suddenly, looking very much like a hungry animal. "Surely the prodigal must return. Be careful, Satsuki, of those you spurn." She sighed and leaned back, lips pressing together and eyes sparking with merciless amusement, as she continued to grip her daughter by the shoulders. "In the meantime, we have a little time to say goodbye."

Satsuki's eyes widened.

*Shit.*

Twenty minutes later, Satsuki stumbled out of her mother's room, breathing roughly and struggling with trembling fingers to buckle her belt. Hot, dry disgust deadened her soul and turned her mind to a baking wasteland. Ragyo leaned on the doorframe, grinning and wiping at her mouth with the back of her hand.

"You'd better hurry," she purred, reaching out to smooth Satsuki's mussed hair. "You don't want to miss the ferry." Ragyo leaned in close, nearly blinding her daughter with her hair. "We'll have more time to talk when you get back."

Satsuki rolled her eyes. She could almost hear the quotation marks around the word 'talk.' It wouldn't be unlike her mother to have a creepy sex-torture dungeon lying around somewhere.

*I won't be back, you insufferable bitch*, Satsuki thought, but kept her internal mutterings to herself. "I'm proud of you, Satsuki," Ragyo smirked. "It's a good plan, though your timing could have been better. It looks like you came too soon" She laughed so hard at her own atrocious joke that Satsuki thought she was going to fall down on the floor right then and there to beat the floor with her fists.

With a sudden, horrible clarity, Satsuki realized where her sense of humor had come from. It was all she could do not to throw up in her mouth. She firmly resolved to never make another joke again.

Without another word, she picked up her things from where she had dropped them in the hallway and walked away. Feeling her mother's eyes on her, she kept her shoulders stiff and thrown back. As soon as she turned the corner, however, she slumped and let out a deep sigh, leaning on the wall for a moment as she raked her fingers through her hair.

*That could've gone better.*

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At 4:25, Satsuki called Inumuta. For a while, she toyed with the idea of ruining her mother in spite of everything, but, she realized, without leverage she knew she would be hunted ruthlessly to the ground. The goal of her plan was not to have the last word but to escape.

*Guess we really are cut from the same cloth, Dad.*

She turned her mind forward and steeled herself for the next step, clicking the old-fashioned ferry-phone receiver back into its cradle. Immediately, she changed into her swimsuit, her mind drifting back to when she bought it.

*"You're getting a Speedo, Sats? Like, the tiny, embarrassing nut-squashing man-trunks?"*

*"It's a brand, Ryuko, you child!"*

Leaving only the knife strapped to her leg, Satsuki went to stand on the deck, feet braced against the hot metal, waiting. Nui was out of the country, so she knew who was coming. Satsuki shut her eyes, steeling herself.

At four-thirty nearly on the nose, a small speedboat appeared over the horizon, moving so quickly its smooth lines blurred into jagged splashes of white and gray. The water steamed as it split before the lifted nose of the craft, and Satsuki just managed to make out a tuft of red and black before the small boat smashed unceremoniously into the side of the ferry, making it rock and groan metallically in protest of the rude treatment.

Then, faster than the eye could follow, she was there.

Panting with exertion and false ecstasy, hair lifted and wild about her face, Ryuko locked her red-rimmed eyes with her sister's, lips curled back into a sneering smile.

When she was like this, Satsuki called her sister Evil Ryuko. Not only in this state was she drunk with rage and power, but was also highly susceptible to the melodious tinkering of their mother's influence. While on life fibers, there was nothing Ryuko wouldn't do for her dear old mother.

"Hey, Satsuki." Her voice was rough, like gravel, laced with malice and latent sadism. "Mama says you've been real bad." Ryuko licked her lips, brandishing her scissor blade, cutting the air until it hummed. "You gonna cry, sis? Come on, I won't tell anyone."

Satsuki didn't bother trying to reason with her. Long experience had taught her the futility of reason. Instead, she suddenly tensed and leapt into a neat dive into the water, swimming down deep to tread underwater, opening her eyes to look up. Above her, she saw Ryuko crash into the bay like a dive-bomber, thrashing and struggling to maneuver her blade against the water. Satsuki stayed put for a moment, enjoying the comforting feel of the ocean pressing against her all around. She wanted to stay there in the cool darkness forever,

but her lungs began to burn for air, so softly she slipped to the surface for a surreptitious breath.

A sudden wave of scorching heat passed her as Ryuko managed to swing down her scissor with such force that it boiled the water under it. Screaming mindlessly and spluttering against the salt water, she thrashed for a fighting-hold. Satsuki smirked and slipped back under the water. Ryuko had always been a poor swimmer. Here, her strength counted for nothing.

*I just need to stay out of her way until she crashes .*

Despite the soundness of her strategy, Ryuko held out for a long time, and Satsuki was soon exhausted. Her lungs ached and it was impossible to take her breaths silently, making her game of hide-and-seek that much more difficult.

"Come here, you bitch!" Ryuko screeched, sounding garbled and hoarse from the salt-water. "When I'm done with you, you won't be able to sit for a week!" Satsuki went to dive as her sister made to grab at her, but she was too slow. Ryuko's hand closed around her ankle and dragged her to the surface. Frantically, Satsuki sculled the water with her hands to keep above water, smashing her free heel into Ryuko's shoulder. "Got you!" Ryuko cackled, grabbing Satsuki by the hair and shaking her like a terrier with a rat.

Ryuko, realizing that she couldn't swim with both hands full, tossed her blade onto the deck of the ferry, kicking her feet clumsily to grab onto the chain that held the anchor. From there, she had enough leverage to push her sister's head underwater, holding her there. The red under her eyes throbbed with the rapid beating of her heart, and she grinned in wild triumph. Throwing her head back, Ryuko crowed, the sound echoing eerily against the metal side of the boat.

Under the water, Satsuki struggled to stay calm, knowing that an erratic flailing for air would only deplete her oxygen supply even more. She grabbed the hand that held her hair, prying uselessly at



the fingers. As her chest jerked against her closed mouth, screaming for air, Satsuki suddenly realized that it was over - she had lost.

*I'm going to die.*

In congruently, she worried for her sister.

*Oh, God. What will it be like for her when she wakes up? Will she even know what happened?*

Suddenly, the grip on her hair loosened and Ryuko slumped face-first into the water, breaking Satsuki from her morbid thoughts. Suddenly survival was the only thing important to her, and she forcefully tore her head back and out of the water, taking in huge gulps of the rough, salty air. For a moment, she could only hold onto the anchor-chain, waiting for the spots before her eyes to recede. Suddenly, however, she sparked back to life and noticed her sister floating face-down in the water. Still gripping the chain, she reached out with one hand and grabbed Ryuko by the back of her soaked shirt, pulling her up into her arms. Holding her close, she set her ear against her chest, checking for the steady thumping of the heart inside. Sighing in relief, Satsuki pulled back a little, examining Ryuko's slack-jawed face. She was pale, and the red under her eyes had finally been bleached out. Tears sprang to Satsuki's eyes and she buried her face into her sister's hot neck, her breath coming in sobs of emotion and exhaustion.

For a long while she gathered her strength, holding Ryuko's limp body tightly against her. With a groan, however, she finally made to climb the chain back onto the deck, her pruny fingers trembling to bear her sister's dead weight. When she collapsed onto the sunburnt deck, she realized she was parched, and stood on trembling legs to find water, leaving Ryuko sprawled out where she lay.

When Satsuki came back, dressed and with two bottles of water, Ryuko was awake and holding her head in her hands.

"Sats...?" she croaked, blinking against the furious glare of the sun. "What happened? Why are we on the ferry? Are we going somewhere?"

While a part of her was always grateful that Ryuko never remembered what she did while under the influence, a larger part of her was very, very annoyed. Satsuki huffed and sat down across from her sister, throwing a water bottle into her lap. Ryuko smiled sheepishly, a goofy, fearful hopefulness painted over her features.

"You okay, Sats? Why are we wet?"

"We're not going anywhere, Ryuko," Satsuki delivered, deadpan. "I'm leaving." Ryuko's face fell, brow pinched together in confusion.

"Leaving? When will you be back?"

"Never."

Ryuko put her head down, rubbing at her aching temples with the tips of her fingers, desperate tears beginning to pool in her eyes..

"Why?" Satsuki wanted to tell her it was because she hated her, and that she never wanted to see her again. She wanted Ryuko to hate her, find somebody else. She sighed.

"I won't be a part of this anymore. We are in the business of destroying lives. Do you realize how many people die from life fibers? It disgusts me."

"But it's just... but... don't you love me?" It was pathetic, how those words tore at Satsuki's heart, but she took her sister by the shoulders and shook her.

"Ryuko, do you not realize that at home I am in essence the family sex slave? I have nothing here." Ryuko flinched, looking away, but a sly smile still crept onto her face.

"I prefer 'fuckable pet.'" Satsuki slapped her.

"I'm serious." Satsuki stood, forcing her lip to keep from trembling.  
"I'm going to disappear, and I don't ever want to see you again."

Ryuko stood suddenly, face paling as she threw herself at Satsuki, burying her face into her chest.

"I can't... what will I do without you? Sats... I need you! I don't... what will I do?"

"What you've been doing all your life." Satsuki said, coldly, "Running drugs and doing tricks for your mother." Ryuko growled and pushed her back, swaying on her feet.

"Fuck you, Kiryuin Satsuki! Fuck you!"

Satsuki said nothing, but placed a hand on Ryuko's shoulder to keep her from falling. Silently, she picked up a life jacket and threaded her sister's arms through it as she stumbled to keep her footing. As she clicked the clasps shut, she placed a small kiss on Ryuko's forehead.

"Watch out for yourself, Matoi Ryuko, because I'm not going to do it for you anymore."

"Sats..."

Satsuki pushed her overboard and signaled the very shaken ferry captain to keep going. Her ears just barely detected the tiny splash as Ryuko hit the water. Peeking just a little to make sure her sister had managed to stay right-side-up, she pulled the trigger on the emergency flare-gun over Ryuko's position.

Shoulders slumping, she breathed a sigh of relief. It was all over. Angrily, she swiped at the tears running down her cheeks.

*Never look back .*

---

Are flashbacks like negative plot? Un-plot? Anyway, I basically wrote like two paragraphs a day for two weeks, so I hope it's not too discombobulated.

# The Dragon

One year ago:

He was falling asleep, his head back, feet propped on the desk. The blinds in his office were open, and he was being rude, but he had come too far, climbed too high, to let someone tell him to get his boots off the desk. Gamagoori Ira stretched lazily, bored and on the brink of restlessness. All he could do was wait, and he hated it. Frowning, he halfheartedly lifted a foot and let it pound back down onto the wood beneath.

*Desk job... disgraceful.*

He should be out there, looking for them. The Dragon. The Mayfly. Both still at large. His fingers clenched involuntarily, huge knuckles going white. He wasn't willing to rest on his laurels. The Seamstress wasn't enough. They needed to be behind bars, and he would be damned if he wasn't going to be the one to put them there.

As if summoned by his thoughts, the phone rang. Hastily, Gamagoori snatched up the receiver. The voice on the other line was terse, brief.

"She's here. You have less than an hour."

He didn't bother to put the phone back into its cradle.

---

Bored, Ryuko put her head back and sighed internally, but still she smiled brightly, jauntily baring her pointed eye-teeth. The bar was crowded but well-protected, several looming bouncers at the door and milling about. She liked to pretend that it was dark outside, that the stars were shining, but she knew that outside it was hot and bright and sticky. Out of old habit, her eyes twitched towards the bar,

eyes roving for a face she knew she wouldn't see. Wincing, she put her head down.

*Ryuko, you stupid fuck, she berated herself, Stop looking. It's been five years.*

She couldn't help it. It was how it always used to go. They were a team, the Dragon, the Seamstress, and the Mayfly.

*Now I'm the only one left.* To alleviate the sudden aching swell of her heart, Ryuko forced her eyes to flicker over the crowd, looking for customers from her seat at an empty table. It was harder to attract them, these days, without Nui's provocative charm and Satsuki's smooth beauty. Feeling suddenly self-conscious, Ryuko raked her fingers through her wild mop of hair, wishing she had bothered to wash it. As she rolled her dirty red streak between her fingers, her roving eyes lit upon a blind man standing (somewhat awkwardly) by himself. To her surprise, his guide dog was a bloodhound, and she suddenly yearned to scratch the black saddle of color on the excited creature's shoulders. The man startled suddenly, as if impossibly catching her gaze, and tromped out, looking incongruously over his shoulder.

*Stupid dork probably just wanted to bring his dog in,* Ryuko thought, grinning goofily to herself.

Her gaze snapped back to the foreground as a nervous face appeared before her.

"Hey," he whispered, licking his lips and continuously looking over his shoulder. "You selling?"

*Noob,* Ryuko thought, mentally rolling her eyes.

"Yeah," she drawled. "You buying?"

"Gimme a teenth of the red stuff."

"Fat chance, buster. Let's see that hand!" Growling a little, but still swinging his head back and forth, he sat down and offered her his hand. He looked away and rolled his jaw as she punctured the tip of his finger and squeezed a tiny drop of blood onto a plastic slide. Whistling a few notes, Ryuko slipped the glass into the little machine and drummed her fingers as she waited for it to beep.

"Sorry, bud. You might be able to fool your friends, but this lil' fucker doesn't lie."

"No! It must be a mistake. I'm a hybrid, I swear!"

Always the same.

"I can give you the blue stuff..."

"Fuck, no! Take my another reading! Damn machine must be broken!"

Ryuko just stared at him, bored.

"Nope. You want the blue?"

"Everyone knows that shit's just food color and coke! I want the real stuff!"

Slowly, Ryuko stood, cracking her knuckles.

"You heard about me...?" Paling a little, his scowl faded to be replaced by sallow, shivering fear. He shook his head repeatedly as he backed away. "I could give you the red, and let you kill yourself, but you know what? That's just bad business. Can't run around killing your customers, heh?" She leaned over the table, planting one white sneaker in the middle of it. "As it stands, though, you ain't my customer, so I could go either way on the killing business. So..." Lazily, she plucked a toothpick from a stand on the table and rolled it between her fingers, grinning wolfishly as she glanced sidelong through her bangs. "You want the blue?"

The transaction was pretty simple after that point.

Huffing, Ryuko sat back down, waving sarcastically at the hastily retreating back of her newest customer.

*This was so much easier when Sats sold to the non-hybrids. I can't stand these losers.* Sighing, she leaned an elbow on the table, resting her head on her hand. Eyes slipping shut, she tapped a steady rhythm on the table, letting it lull her aching nerves.

---

Seven years ago:

*Wild!* Ryuko thought, grinning with all her might as she stood atop the table stamping her feet and waving a shot of tequila over her head. No one cared that she was underage. Even if they did, no one dared to stop her. The room, a faceless mass of hot, excited bodies, howl with appreciation as she tossed the shot back. Laughing outright, she threw herself backward into a bar stool, letting the spinning of the chair bleed out her momentum.

"Dragon! Dragon!" The chant began quietly, but quickly tore into an insistent, swelling roar. Ryuko lifted her hands and leaned back against the bar, feeling the chant throb in time with her heart. She took one last spin, and as her back was to the crowd, swiftly dumped a packet of red powder into her mouth. Holding a finger up, she instantly hushed the throng, wagging her eyebrows at the sweaty, glowing faces before her. Pausing for a long moment, she grinned with her mouth closed, feeling the excitement bubble in her chest. Finally, Ryuko suddenly threw her head back and, with a coughing roar, blew out the powder she held in her mouth, creating a billowing cone of red dust that sparkled in the muggy air. The crowd screamed, delighted, and Ryuko turned back to the bar to order another drink as some poor desperados struggled to collect enough dust from the air to make a proper line.

Dipping her nose into her drink, Ryuko's eyes roved the bar for her sisters. She found them quickly, despite their unassuming positions.



She rolled her eyes at Nui, who was in the middle of an entirely unnecessarily sexy drinking game. From the looks of it, it was a cross between beer pong and strip poker, and the blonde was either losing badly or winning by a landslide, depending on your point of view. Ryuko found Satsuki at the bar, sipping at a cranberry juice.

Leaning a little onto her elbow, Ryuko allowed herself to stare, drinking in the line of Satsuki's jaw, the glow of her skin in the orange light of the lamps, wishing she could bury her hands into that lush charcoal hair and kiss her silly right then and there. A sleepy, goofy smile crept over her face as her heart throbbed painfully against her breastbone. Unfortunately, Satsuki caught Ryuko's eye and promptly destroyed her with her eyebrows. *What are you doing?* she mouthed. *Stop it.* Unfazed, Ryuko made petulant kissy faces at her, but Satsuki had already turned away.

*Whatever. I'll get her back later .*

Ryuko turned back to the business at hand, jumping up onto her stool.

"You hybrids ready to know what it's like to be alive?"

She wished she hadn't asked - the screaming was ear-shattering. "All right, line up, line up!" Nui sauntered over, somehow fully clothed again. She handled the blood and the money, and Ryuko looked hastily away as her sister pricked several hands in quick succession with her sharp needles. Once cleared and skinned of their cash, each patron received a tiny envelope from Ryuko, who grinned and winked with abandon.

The bar continued to pulse and swell with its human contents, even as several of its occupants began to trickle out. Out of the corner of her eye, Ryuko noticed Satsuki slipping from her bar stool and beginning to mingle among the crowd, grasping elbows and whispering into ears. Smaller, more discreet packages slipped from her finger to be quietly pocketed. Ryuko was content to watch her flit

silently through the shadows of the large room, but soon an unpleasant commotion caught her attention.

"I don't care what it says! I can take it!"

"Back up, cutie, you don't wanna get hurt, hm?"

Ryuko's heart stopped, her throat going dry. Nui was looking at her over her shoulder, purple eyes lidded and pleased as she held back a tow-headed girl with the tip of one pinky. Angry, the muscular youth pushed at Nui, but the seamstress' thin arms didn't budge an inch. Struggling a little, she huffed and turned to shout at Ryuko.

"Give it to me! I got the cash! What do you care, anyway?"

"Only your health in mind, sweetie," Nui purred. Someone chuckled nervously, but the air had been sucked out of the room. Revelers turned to spectators in the blink of an eye, and a small circle formed around the three. Ryuko sat down and put her head into her hands. She hated it when this happened. Glancing up quickly, she locked eyes with a pale, stone-faced Satsuki. The only sound was the heavy swell of breath in the sticky air. Happily, Nui took over.

"You think you're special? Better than any other non-hybrid out there?" Nui scoffed, moving as if to brush a feather out of the air. Despite the lightness of her movement, however, the furious girl grunted and flew back, crashing into a chair on the fringe of the unsteady circle of interested bodies. "What makes you so strong?"

"I-"

"Shut up! I'll bet you're weak! Look at you." Wheezing, the girl moved to stand, but Nui planted a pink heel into her chest. Someone gasped, but no one moved. "You want some red, hm? Fine, I'll give it to you. Prove yourself." Grabbing a packet from Ryuko's limp fingers, Nui drew two shimmering lines on the table. Nui's malicious sneer turned sadistic as she turned to the crowd. "Any other Nonnies around?"

Silently, Ryuko begged her not to raise her hand, begged her to just go and wait outside and they would figure it out from there. She winced as she saw her sister's hand rise up, alone. This was how they played the game. Ryuko was suddenly struck with the sick horror of her own life, making her stomach tighten and flutter like a hand clenched too hard and too long.

"Hey," Ryuko piped up, forcing the light jauntiness of her earlier tone. "Come on, we don't need to turn this into a..." She stopped suddenly, teeth trapping and holding her lip as Nui caught Satsuki around the waist as she broke the circle. The crowd suddenly cawed with appreciation as Nui suddenly locked lips with Satsuki, dipping her over her arm. After a little too long, Nui spun her into the chair across from the tow-headed rebel still panting in her chair.

"You a Nonnie, sweetie?" Ryuko hated Nui for the way her fingers stroked across Satsuki's shoulders as she leaned in to her ear. Feigning interest, Satsuki nodded. Ryuko scoffed, disgusted with the crowd for falling for a few insincere flutters of her sister's eyelashes.

*Keep it in your pants fellas, she thought, fists clenching on her knees, or I'm gonna take those-*

"Wanna try some red?" Satsuki shrugged, peeking out over her shoulder in false shyness, playing the part she had been given. Still, she found time to flick a reassuring smile at Ryuko, rolling her eyes as if Nui's theatrics were some hilarious inside joke. The knot in Ryuko's stomach softened, but still she glared at the other girl at the table, hating her.

*This wouldn't have to happen if you'd just buy the fucking blue like everyone else, you little shit!*

"Look," Nui sighed, leaning across the table. "You think you can handle red, fine. Try it out, but I bet you this fine lady can hold her fibers better than you." The girl sneered at Satsuki, taking in the glossy sheen of her hair and her manicured fingernails.

"Bet not," she rasped, folding her arms and leaning back.

"Bet your life?" Startled by the question, the girl leaned away from Nui, eyebrows quirked. "Look," Nui drawled, planting a hand on the table and tapping a finger between the red lines she had drawn before. "Here's the deal. You handle this line better than sweet cheeks over here, you have my blessing. Free pass to all the libers you can snort. If not..." Ryuko didn't want to know what Nui whispered into the girl's ear, but she wished she would just get up and walk away. Her eyes widened, but just as quickly narrowed, and she pounded her fist onto the table like some kind of big-shot and shouted,

"Let's do it!"

The silent mass spoke up, pleased. A chant picked up, but Ryuko couldn't hear over the buzzing in her ears. Softly she rose and sat down again next to Satsuki, leaning over as she pretended to try to see better. She considered dashing the lines to the ground with a sweep of her hand, but Satsuki must have sensed her intent, for she grasped her hand under the table and squeezed it gently.

*Shh, her eyes said, it's going to be fine.*

People were pumping their fists in the air now, hot, red mouths open. Still Ryuko couldn't hear. All she knew was the feel of Satsuki's fingers between hers as her sister drew the powder through a straw and into her nose, neatly cleaning up the line. She sniffed a few times, brushing the red from her nose with the tips of her fingers and settling her face into a hard mask. Ryuko squeezed her hand, wanting to lean over and kiss her cheek. Ryuko turned a hateful gaze towards Nui, trying to bore into her face with her mind. Nui only winked and looked on, eyes lidded in sadistic lust.

The crowd held its breath, waiting for the drug to take effect. Ryuko closed her eyes as she felt Satsuki's body go rigid, muscles seizing. The grip on her hand suddenly grew unbearably tight, but she

refused to pull away, gritting her teeth and whispering nearly inaudible encouragements to her sister.

The circle of bodies around them tightened as the girl across the table suddenly began to scream in agony. She threw herself from her chair, writhing as the pain grew more intense. One of her wild fists beat into the ground, leaving a crater in the concrete floor. If you asked one of the spectators, they would have claimed it went on for hours, but Ryuko wasn't paying any attention to her. Ceasing to care if anyone saw, she put her free arm around Satsuki, frightened by how still her taut frame had grown.

"Breathe, Sats, come on!" she hissed under her breath, rubbing her hand up and down her back, ignoring the sweat that was pooling between her shoulder blades and at the base of her spine. Ryuko never knew what went on in Satsuki's mind when Nui forced her to take life fibers, but judging from the look on her face, it was something along the lines of "fuck all you bitches, you think you can break me with some measly powder?" Finally, it ended. The blonde girl ceased struggling on the floor, glazed eyes staring blankly at the ceiling, as Satsuki slowly began to relax, slumping over the table.

Face proud, Satsuki stood, extricating her hand from Ryuko's, and flashed a bright smile. The people before her, stunned by the spectacle they had just witnessed, cheered halfheartedly.

Ryuko breathed a sigh of desperate relief, putting her face in her hands.

*It's fine, she thought, smiling, there's nothing in this world that can hurt Sats! She's stronger than-*

She looked up suddenly at the rattle of chairs. Satsuki was muscling her way through the dense mass of bodies, clawing frantically to the bathroom.

"Sats?" Tripping over herself, Ryuko ran after her, screaming like an animal at those in her way. "Sats! Satsuki!"

She caught up with her sister just as she collapsed into a bathroom stall, falling into the crack between the partition and the toilet.

Frantic, mind a buzz of confused panic, Ryuko grabbed the hand that was holding desperately to the toilet seat, trying to tug her sister back up. Finally, as she saw Satsuki's body began to heave, she grabbed her by the hips and yanked her up to the toilet. Hands like claws, Satsuki, clutched the toilet seat with both hands, dragging her mouth over the opening as she retched.

Far from calm, Ryuko held her up with a knee on either side of her waist and pulled her hair back with both hands.

*What the fuck is going on! This has never happened before! She's usually fine! Just tired and... oh, shit!* The water in the toilet bowl was bright red and chunky, and Satsuki wasn't done yet. *Fuck! Fuck! No!*

"Someone call an ambulance!" Ryuko screeched over her shoulder, begging every god she knew of that someone would hear her. Tears were coming and she couldn't stop them. Still yelling for help, Ryuko put her face into her sister's back and sobbed. "Come on, come on! No!" Satsuki turned suddenly in her grip, mouth and chin bright red against her pale face. She opened her mouth as if to say something, reaching to touch Ryuko's cheek, before her eyes rolled back into her head and she collapsed onto Ryuko's chest, smearing her shirt with blood. Her sudden weight pushed Ryuko to the floor, and for a long moment all she could do was hold her, cry, and scream for help.

---

"What do you mean? She's done it loads of times and she's been fine!"

The Kiryuin family doctor sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose with the tips of his finger.

"Miss Matoi, that's exactly why she *isn't* fine now - because she's done it "loads" of times. Were you aware that your sister is not a hybrid?"

"Yeah, but I -"

"What were you thinking? Surely you realize that life fibers are lethal to non-hybrids. Any one of those hits she's been taking could have killed her. It's a miracle she's alive now. "

"But... Sats is different."

"I assure you, Miss Matoi, she is not."

Ryuko stared up at him, mouth twisted down, nothing to say. He sighed again, pushing his glasses up onto his forehead. Completely devoid of energy, he gently pushed her aside. "Excuse me, I must give her care instructions to Mr. Soroi." fixing Ryuko with a firm stare, he suddenly towered over her. "Take better care of your sister from now on."

Ryuko nodded, biting her lip. When he had disappeared down the hall, Ryuko took off, running faster than she ever had in her life.

---

She smashed the door open, literally splintering it off of its hinges.

"Ah, Ryuko, so good of you to-"

"Shut it, Mom! What the hell is your problem?" Ragyo's face darkened. It was rather amusing to have her daughter break down her doors to get to her, but that tone was unacceptable. Faster than the eye could move, her hand lashed out and took Ryuko firmly by the throat. Ryuko shut her mouth, but fixed her mother with a hideous glare.

"I'll speak with you, daughter," Ragyo murmured, sitting Ryuko down in an armchair, "but only civilly, do you understand me?" Rubbing at her neck, Ryuko nodded, shaking her red-streaked hair out of her eyes.

"Why..." she started, mouth opening and closing silently a few times. "Why are you making Satsuki take life fibers?" Ragyo shrugged, cheeks curling into a smile.

"It is the Kiryuin legacy."

"But..."

"It is the fate of the weak to die."

Ryuko stopped as if struck.

"You... you *want* her to die?"

Her mother purred and sat down upon the arm of the chair, softly stroking Ryuko's hair.

"Shh... no, no. It is a shame that there must be those who are selected naturally for death, but it's for the best. Haven't you found that she holds you back, keeping you from what you could be?" Ryuko squirmed to the other side of the chair, hot tears suddenly brimming. The thought of standing over a closed coffin, listening to the priest drone on about eternal life, was utterly unbearable to her. She considered shoving her mother away from her, but instead curled in on herself, drawing her knees up to her chest.

"Why... why didn't you kill her before?" Ragyo stood and tossed her head.

"She has her... merits." her mother paused to lift a provocative eyebrow at her, "An excellent little bed-fellow, as you well know."

The comparison caught Ryuko off guard, and a hideous flame burst to life in her chest.

"Don't you dare."

"Or what? You'll kill me? This is what it comes down to, Matoi Ryuko. Your sister is a miserable failure, and like it or not there are



consequences to being weak."

"Please, just stop making her take it!"

"So what?" Ragyo whipped around, baring her teeth, "I can have one daughter whose only value is in entertainment value, and another attached to her hip?" Ryuko pressed her lips together, tilting her head back as her hands clenched.

*No, please. I don't want... No! There'd be nothing left... nobody...*

"No... no, I'll be good. *She'll* be good! I'll make sure!"

"Ha, is that so? And what do I get out of this arrangement?"

Ryuko gulped, steeling herself.

"Anything you want, Mother."

---

A few hours later, Ryuko trembled violently as she pushed the door open to Satsuki's bedroom. Her skin was hot and red and her hair slicked with water against her neck. She hadn't bothered to dress after leaving the bathhouse, and she was dripping all over the carpet.

She didn't care.

She had done what she needed to do.

Carefully, mindful of the new bruises on her thighs, Ryuko slipped into the bed, shivering as the cool sheets brushed soothingly over her hot skin. Desperate, broken, she snuggled up next to Satsuki's still body, pressing her face into the crook of her neck. Looking up at her face, she was suddenly filled with rage. She wanted to tear the oxygen tubes out of her nose, rip the IV out of her arm and shake her awake, tell her she was fine, to get up. As soon as the feeling came, it passed. Tired, Ryuko leaned up and softly kissed Satsuki's

cheek before rolling over and snuggling her bare back into her sister's side, feeling every slow breath ripple through her spine.

*I'll take care of you, sis. Whatever it takes.*

---

Ryuko jerked awake, finding a puddle of drool in her palm.

*Gross .*

Shaking herself, she looked around the bar. It was nearly empty.

*Shit, I hardly sold anything! Nui's gonna kill me... oh, wait.* She grinned suddenly as she remembered that Nui was safely in prison. *Ha ha, the little asshole. Hope she rots.* She shook herself, confused. Why she was still dreaming about events that occurred over five years ago was beyond her. It suddenly struck her that, for better or for worse, she was alone now.

Sighing, she stretched and began to gather her things.

---

Outside the bar, Gamagoori had forced his massive frame into an alleyway much too small for him. Tired from his long stakeout, he waved over the blind man and the hound with a motion somewhat less than discreet. Noticing, he scurried over, taking off the glasses and revealing a pair of decidedly not-blind eyes.

"She's still in there, boss, but I think she's getting ready to leave."

"Good, good, get ready." Gamagoori tensed every muscle he owned, itching for the chase sure to come.

*Dragon, today you will be mine .* His determination, however, did not distract him from his colleague's odd taste in disguise. "Uh, is that a bloodhound?"

"Yeah, it's, like, my seeing-eye dog."

"I'm pretty sure they don't use those as seeing-eye dogs. You couldn't get a lab or a retriever or something?"

"Look, sir, this was all they had at the pound." the man rolled his eyes and walked away to take up his position. Gamagoori resisted the urge to slap his palm against his face. Shaking his head, he stared at the door, begging her to come out.

Ryuko exited the establishment to find a gun against her head.

"Dragon," a huge blondie boomed at her, flashing a badge. "You're under arrest."

*Aw, hell no!*

Before Gamagoori could blink, she had jumped onto the roof, tearing open a package with her teeth and practically dumping its contents up her nose. Gamagoori grinned. The chase was on.

When Ryuko came back to herself, she was in handcuffs.

"Well, fuck me."